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ABSTRACT

Interviews were conducted with 30 shift workers and 30 day workers in the paper industry to discover differences in their experience of retirement. Each group of 30 workers was further divided (10 workers in each group) into those who had been retired for less than 1 year, those who had been retired for 2-4 years, and those who had been retired for 8-12 years. Life satisfaction was measured using an 18-point scale developed by Lohmann (1980). In addition to day versus shift work, a number of other variables were measured for their possible relation to satisfaction: time since retirement, age, income, and activities along with subjective health and functional health ratings. Shift workers were also questioned as to how they felt now that they were retired, with possible responses of better, worse, or no change. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between day and shift workers in satisfaction with retirement (most were satisfied to very satisfied). However, three variables--physical health, functional health, and activities--significantly affected satisfaction with retirement at the .0001 level. Future research was suggested to determine if shift and day workers differ in satisfaction with retirement, or whether retirement affects these workers in a similar way. (13 references) (KC)

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Retirement Satisfaction Among Day and Shift Workers

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Running Head: RETIREMENT

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Abstract

The notion that adjustment to retirement may be different for day and shift workers has gone largely unexplored even though a large number of people in our society work shifts. The present exploratory research examines differences in satisfaction with retirement between day and shift workers in the paper industry. Interviews were conducted with 30 shift workers and 30 day workers. Each group of 30 workers was further divided into those who had been retired for less than one year (n=10), those who had been retired for 2-4 years (n=10), and those who had been retired for 8-12 years (n=10). Life satisfaction was measured using an 18-point scale developed by Lohmann. In addition to the day vs. shift work, a number of other variables were measured for their possible relation to satisfaction: time since retirement, age, income, and activities along with subjective health and functional health ratings. Shift workers were also questioned as to how they felt now that they were retired, with possible responses of better, worse, or no change. The results indicated that there were no significant differences between day and shift workers in satisfaction with retirement. However, three variables- physical health, functional health, and activities- significantly affected satisfaction with

retirement at the .0001 level. Future research is suggested to determine if shift and day workers' differ in satisfaction with retirement, or whether retirement affects these workers in a similar way. This research should focus on whether day and shift workers may differ on variables not examined here, and whether variables in addition to those found in this study may affect retirement significantly.

Retirement Satisfaction Among Day and Shift Workers

As an important life event, retirement may necessitate adjustment in a variety of ways. Both the loss of the work role and the potential increase in unstructured time can be sources of problems for the retiree (Hooker & Ventis, 1984). The retiree must also deal with the loss of his or her familiar role and a change in identity (Hunnisett, 1970). Increasing health problems have also been linked to reduced satisfaction with retirement (Blank, Ritchie, & Ryback, 1983). Lower income and a negative attitude toward retirement may also be responsible for much of the dissatisfaction found in earlier studies (Beck, 1982). Clearly, there are a number of factors that may contribute to an individual's relative satisfaction or dissatisfaction with retirement.

Much of the early research into this area was directed at determining how retirement affected the social and psychological adjustment of older people. Some research has found that most retirees are satisfied with retirement (Friedmann & Orbach, 1974), while others have found that retirees are not satisfied in their post-retirement years (Blank, Ritchie, & Ryback, 1983). Other studies have questioned the effects of retirement on a person's health; one study has suggested that retirement may, in fact, improve

a person's health (Ekerdt, Bosse, & LoCastro, 1983).

The contradictory findings concerning satisfaction with retirement suggest that some retirees are satisfied while others are not. The question now becomes why? Of particular importance to this area is the identification of the variables which are important for achieving satisfaction in the retirement years. For example, Hooker and Ventis (1984) found that work-related values in conjunction with activities are important factors influencing life satisfaction in retirement. However, Beck (1982) suggests that health and income are of primary importance for personal happiness in retirement. These differing views shed light on an important area of present and future research: The identification of all variables which exhibit an influence on satisfaction with retirement.

Of particular concern to this study was Atchley's (1979) observation that very little is known about the effects of retirement on specific occupations. One major distinction in the world of work has to do with work schedules, for example the distinction between day workers (those who work a standard daylight-hours shift) and shift workers (who alternate between day and night shifts). Given the enormous amount of shift-workers in America, surprisingly little is known about their adjustment to retirement.

Several characteristics of shift work suggest that its

impact on retirement might be substantially different from other workers. The round the clock lifestyle that shift workers carry on is the source of numerous problems. For example, human errors such as those which caused the accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl are more likely to occur on the night shift (Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1989). Also, shift workers are 2-3x more likely to have ulcers and 2-3x more likely to suffer from heart disease (Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1989). Finally, differences in the diurnal cycle might be significant in determining satisfaction with retirement.

The current investigation explored differences in life satisfaction after retirement between day and shift workers retired from two paper mills in the Fox River Valley in northeastern Wisconsin. In addition to measuring satisfaction, information was collected on self-perceived physical and functional health, income, activities, and, among the shift workers, changes in their subjective well-being attributed to discontinuing shift work, especially concerning changes in sleep.

Method

Participants

Participants were 30 day workers and 30 shift workers. Because too few women shift workers (fewer than five on the lists provided by the company) have retired from these mills

to date to permit a comparison of gender, all the participants in this study were male. Each group of 30 workers was further divided into three groups: those retired for less than one year (n=10); those retired 2-4 years (n=10); and those retired 8-12 years (n=10). Participants were randomly selected from lists provided by the paper company (participants were assured that the research was not being sponsored by the company, though). These retirees were contacted first by mail (an introductory letter) and then by phone (to make an interview appointment).

Data Collection

Personal interviews were conducted with 58 of the participants. Two of the participants selected were vacationing in the south for the winter. Rather than exclude them, and in an attempt to explore the responses of those who were physically and financially able to travel, these two interviews were conducted by mail (participants were sent a life-satisfaction questionnaire) and by long-distance telephone calls. Satisfaction after retirement was measured using a general life satisfaction scale developed by Lohmann (1980). This 18-item scale has a reported reliability of .88. After participants completed the life satisfaction scale, a short interview was conducted that focused on a set of probe questions derived from previous research on adjustment to retirement--the orientation of these questions

was the participant's perceptions of their own retirement:

1. Physical health: Do you have any chronic health problems? Do you take any medications? Do you feel that your health has become better or worse since retirement?

2. Functional health: How well do you feel you can get along in your environment? Do you feel you have any problems or restrictions?

3. Income: How adequate do you feel your income is? Would you say that you do not have enough money, have enough to make it, or have plenty for your lifestyle? (This question initially asked how much money participants made; it was revised when pilot interviews showed they refused to answer).

4. Activities: How do you spend most of your time? In what activities are you involved?

5. Occupation: Do you feel that your occupation affected your retirement? If so, how?

6. Subjective well-being (shift workers only): How was it adjusting to a new pattern of sleep upon retirement? Do you feel better, worse, or about the same now that you no longer work shifts?

Results

Answers to the probe questions and other variables which were assessed were coded as follows:

1. Type of work- day vs. shift.

2. Time since retirement- less than 1 year, 2-4 years, 8-12 years.
3. Age.
4. Marital status- married, divorced, or widowed.
5. Retirement satisfaction- score on scale.
6. Physical Health- no problems, minor problems, serious/life threatening problems.
7. Functional Health- no restrictions, minor restrictions, severe restrictions.
8. Income- plenty for lifestyle, enough/sufficient, not enough.
9. Activity level- high, moderate, low.
10. Occupation- no answer, paid well, work carried over to retirement, hurt in mill.

The groups were compared using chi-square along with one and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The results indicated no significant differences between day and shift workers on any of the variables. Nor were there any differences related to time since retirement. The life satisfaction scores for day and shift workers at each time since retirement were very similar (see figure 1). Note the relative satisfaction of the entire sample. At each time since retirement in both day and shift workers, the lowest average satisfaction score was 15 out of 18. These high average scores indicate a very satisfied group of retirees.

Another trend to notice is the fact that the life satisfaction scores tended to be lower in the groups which were more distant from the time of retirement.

Shift workers tended to report that their subjective well-being, especially as it concerned their ability to sleep, had improved since retirement. "Oh, I feel a lot better now with the normal hours I have," was one response. Others reported that the adjustment to new sleeping patterns was difficult. "I can still sleep only 4 or 5 hours at a time, but I am beginning to feel better now," was another answer. For some the adjustment was not difficult- "I was adjusted the moment I walked out of the mill." 19 respondents reported that they felt better now that they were finished working shifts, while the other 11 reported no change. However, life satisfaction scores were very similar for those who felt better and those who reported no change (16.7 vs. 16.3 respectively).

Although there were no significant differences between day and shift workers, life satisfaction was significantly related to three variables for day and shift workers together- physical health, functional health, and activity level- Those who were coded in the serious problems or restrictions group and low activity level were significantly different from those in the other two groups ($p < .0001$) (see graphs 2,3, and 4). Those with good physical and functional

health tended to be active and satisfied. "I don't know what retirement is because I have been to busy to notice" and I have nothing to do now that I am retired, and I am two weeks behind on that" are representative responses of the healthy, active, satisfied retirees. These quotations contrast with those who have health problems and/or are not active or satisfied. "I can't do many of the things I used to do because of my health, so my retirement hasn't been as good as I had hoped" and "I don't have any hobbies or anything, I would just go to the mill and work and then go home" illustrate the answers of the participants who were not satisfied.

Day workers were more likely to respond that their work had carried over into retirement in response to the occupation question. 7 day workers responded that they continued similar types of work, while only three shift workers responded in this fashion.

Finally, satisfaction was related to income, but not significantly ($p < .06$). An interesting point to note is that income was rated as sufficient to plenty. 30 retirees rated their income as plenty for their lifestyle, 30 rated their income as enough or sufficient, while none reported that their income was not enough.

Discussion

The present study suggests that the major difference

between day and shift workers is the improvement in subjective well-being reported by the shift workers. This was the only difference between the two groups, which seems to indicate that other variables may be more important than the type of work schedule in predicting satisfaction after retirement: Health appears to be one of the major predictors, as self-perceived good health is often necessary for one's evaluation of functioning and ability to be active. The findings that physical and functional health along with activity level affect satisfaction with retirement significantly confirms the results of earlier studies (Beck, 1982; Hooker & Ventis, 1984; Kremer, 1985).

A second important finding was the overall satisfaction of day and shift workers at each time since retirement. The lowest mean satisfaction score was 15, which is a satisfied score on a scale of 18. The satisfied group of retirees contradicts the findings of Blank et al. (1983) who found retirees to be dissatisfied. The fact that the participants were very satisfied overall even at times less than one year after retirement suggests that retirement is not a very stressful event. These data confirm the findings of a previous study (Bosse et al., 1991), which indicated that retirement may not be as stressful as it was previously considered to be (Barron, Streib, & Suchman, 1952; Rosow, 1974).

The finding that day workers were more likely to respond that their work carried over into retirement is a result of the types of work day and shift workers do. Many day workers are carry out work that involves repair or maintenance to many areas of the mill. Shift workers are more likely to work on paper production jobs. In fact, the 3 shift workers who responded that they were doing similar types of work in retirement were involved in maintenance jobs similar to most day workers. Thus a maintenance-type worker is often involved in a similar work as a hobby after retirement.

Income may possibly be an important predictor of satisfaction in many groups (Beck, 1982), and it was close to significance in the present sample ($p < .06$). It must be also be considered that the participants in this study rated their income as sufficient at worst. Perhaps if the sample had included those who rated their income as inadequate, as is often present in other studies (i.e. Beck, 1982), income may have been another significant predictor of satisfaction with retirement.

The broad categories of work schedule used in this study obviously require empirical fine-tuning. Future research should consider specific characteristics of shift and day work, such as the physical labor involved both as it relates to physical health after retirement and to sleep. The combined effects of shift work and income should also be

examined--the participants in this study all reported that their incomes were adequate to plenty for their lifestyle. The absence of women from this study leaves further significant questions unanswered. Given the multiple roles of women in the work force and as caregivers, the impact of shift work on women can be expected to differ from its impact on men. A final question is whether men who work shifts assume more of the caregiving and homemaking responsibilities since they are at home when young children are also at home. If their roles differ from day workers in this way, does this affect their activities after retirement? Given the importance of retirement as a social role, its relation to changing roles within the family could prove a significant factor in men's retirement in the future.

Acknowledgments

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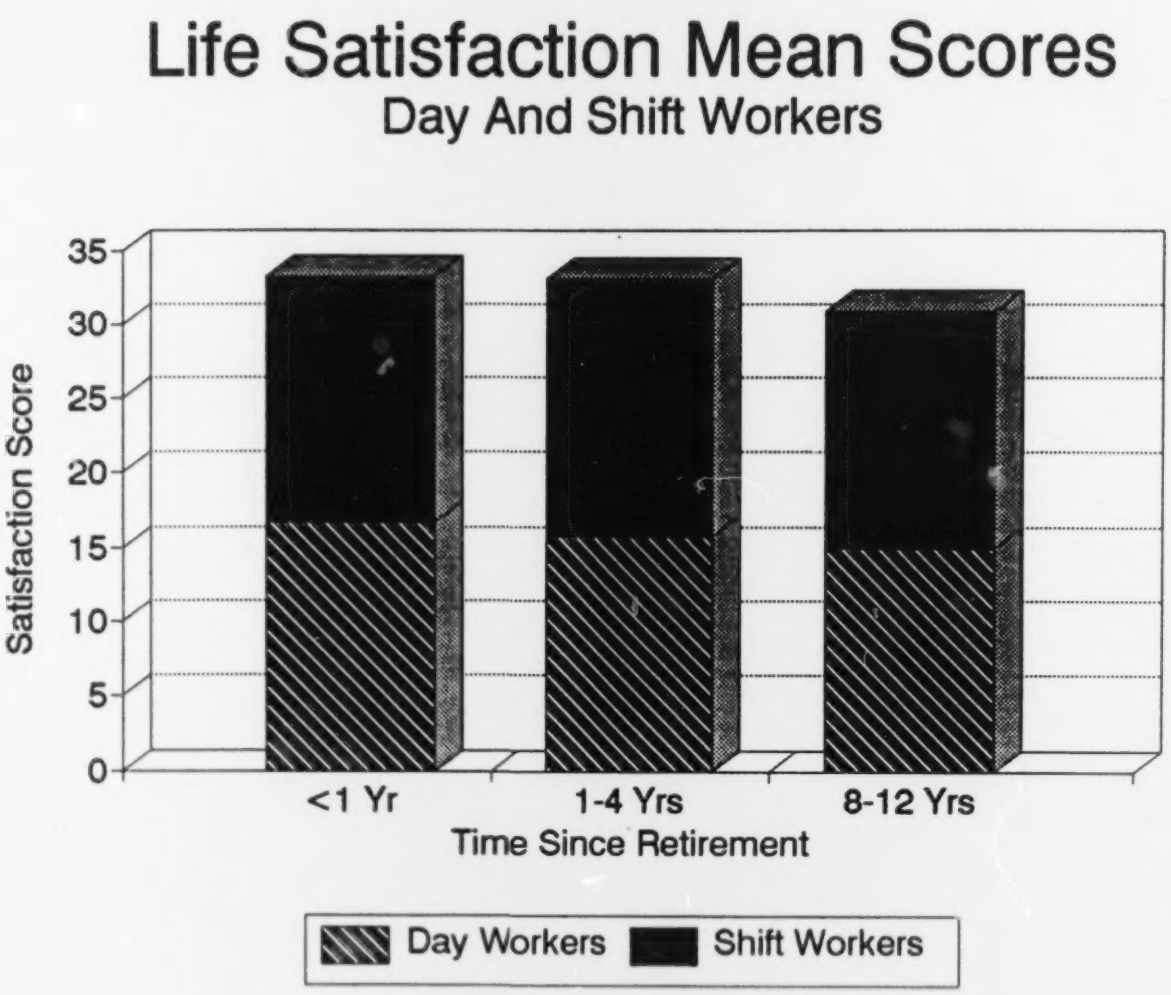
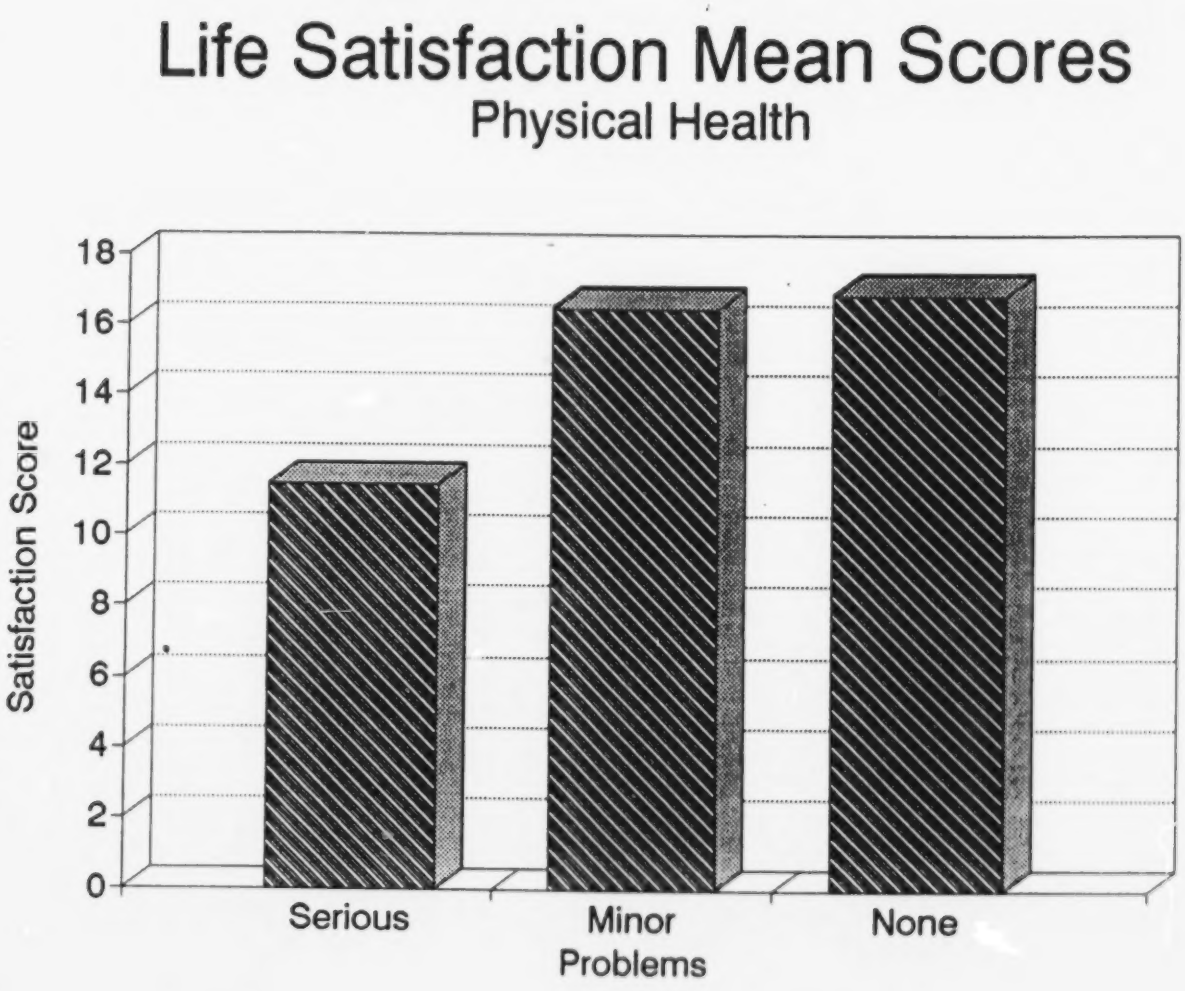
Figure 1



*Mean satisfaction scores for day and shift workers at each time since retirement.

Figure 2

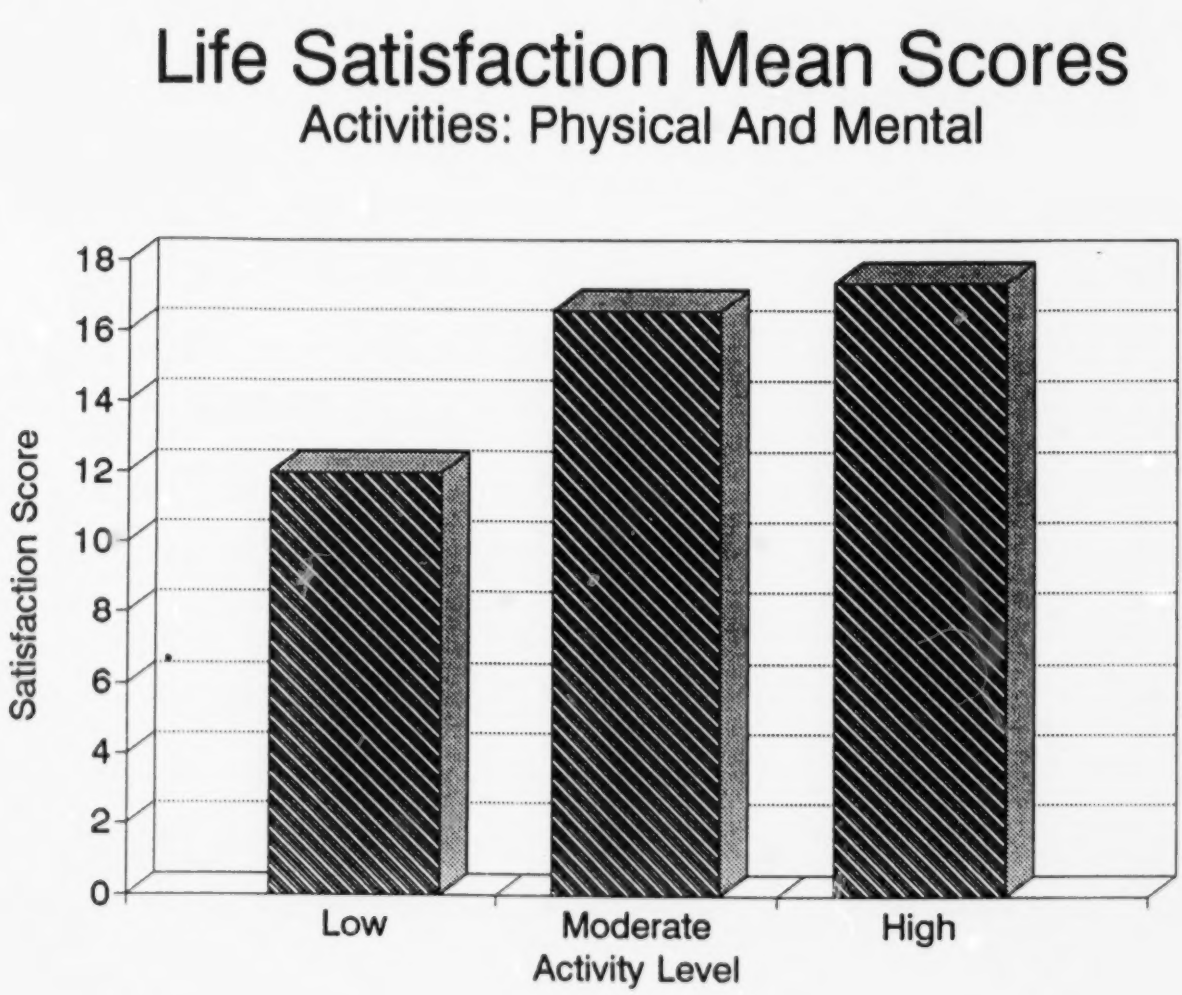


*Mean satisfaction scores for physical health groups- those with serious, minor, and no problems.

Figure 3

*Mean satisfaction scores for functional health groups- serious, minor, and no restrictions.

Figure 4



*Mean satisfaction scores for activity level groups- low, moderate and high.

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